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PRESS RELEASE

USAID SUPPORTS THE FIFTH ANNUAL REGIONAL MICROFINANCE CONFERENCE IN DUSHANBE

Dushanbe, Tajikistan, September 20. The fifth annual regional microfinance conference entitled "Microfinance in Central Asia: Road Ahead" commenced today in Dushanbe. Two hundred representatives of the microfinance sector from the region are gathering to discuss the development of the sector in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan with the overall goal of bringing together key stakeholders to review best international practices.

Representatives from regional microfinance institutions and credit unions, government agencies, national banks, donor agencies, investors, commercial banks, and other interested stakeholders are participating in this event. Ms. Tracey Ann Jacobson, U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan, Mr. Nehmatjon Buriev, Senior Advisor of the President of Tajikistan on Economic Affairs, and Mr. Djuma Eshov, Deputy Head of the National Bank of Tajikistan will open the conference with some remarks.

The conference provides practitioners throughout the region an opportunity to learn about global trends and challenges in microfinance; the transformation of microfinance institutions (MFI); social impact; debt and equity financing; the legal and regulatory environment; the role of the government in microfinance development; MFI foreign exchange risks; attracting deposits; borrower protection; and, rural finance initiatives. The conference also provides an opportunity to meet with credit rating organizations, donors, and investors, and discuss on-going challenges in the sector.

An investor's fair is also being held today to give participants a chance to attract funding for their institutions.

The conference is organized and supported by the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Central Asian Micro Finance Alliance (CAMFA) and the Association of Micro Finance Organizations of Tajikistan (AMFOT). This year, AMFOT took a lead in hosting this important event hoping that in the future other regional microfinance associations will continue the tradition.

The CAMFA project is one of the many assistance projects made possible by the American people through USAID. Since 1992, the American people through USAID have provided more than \$1.5 billion in programs that support Central Asia's health care sector, democratic institutions, education, and economic growth.

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